

Copy of Highways Review Report provided to Hasketon Parish Council Meeting 10th January 2019 (Via County Councillor Robin Vickery)

Re Highways:

When I was appointed Cabinet Member for highways I set up a review of the service and also established the highways improvements and innovations board.

Through the board we are running a pilot project to streamline the way we fix potholes. Our criteria for mending potholes was very complicated with 6 categories of roads and five category of intervention. We ended up last winter with gangs saying they were driving over potholes to get to potholes as they raced round to keep up to speed with the various intervention dates of five days, ten days, two weeks etc. There was, for instance, a case in Brandeston where a highways inspector in mid February found 8 potholes on a stretch of road and we sent gangs in on three separated sates to fix them. An analysis of how our gangs spent their working day showed nearly 37% was spent on travelling and when factors such as their breaks and getting ready in the morning and clearing the vehicle at night were taken into account they were spending only half the day actually working.

In the pilot being run from Phoenix House depot, and covering your area, we have now three categories of road and two categories of intervention and much more of the day is spent on site fixing the road.

We next looked at the whole process of how we run road closures. There are problems because of the sheer volume of road works – the number of working days across Suffolk of road closures have gone up by around 20% in the last 7 years and traffic volumes have also gone up at the same time by 7%. We are holding a meeting with he utility companies to discuss with them how we want them to plan their works better so we have less of those road closures where work starts say on a Monday and nothing happens for a day or so and it drags on. We are also meeting the traffic management companies responsible for running the road closures and putting out the signs and diversions to tell them we need improvements.

My next focus is the way we carry our out routine work: starting with the team responsible for cleaning gullies and drains and the drainage team.

We are working on introducing a community self help scheme. This is taking longer than I would have like to get off the ground because we need to be sure that volunteers will be safe.

Finally, you may have read that in the budget the chancellor allocated £420 m to highways authorities for improving local roads. Suffolk's allocation is £9.67m – this is a great boost but there is a small drawback in that the money has to be spent by the end of March. We are underway and have hired in three thermal patching machines which we are using for fixing potholes – they have a hotbox which heats the road to 200degrees – melting the edges of pothole. Warm tarmac is piled into the hole and then it is rolled so the new fix melds into the road surface with no edges through which water can seep.

Yours with kind regards

Mary

Mary Evans

*Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Rural Affairs
County Councillor for Clare Division, Suffolk County Council*